

Longer wildfire and hurricane seasons.
Dramatic weather patterns. Melting glaciers.
More smog and worse air quality. Had enough?

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We may be seeing a sneak preview of just some of the impacts of global warming. One of my biggest disappointments over my three terms in the Assembly has been the lack of political leadership at the Federal level in dealing with this global problem. The political clout of the oil industry and the automobile companies has dominated in killing any initiatives to address this issue.

The U.S. has 5% of the world's population, yet contributes 25% of its greenhouse gas emissions – the main contributor to global warming – generated by the burning of fossil fuels like oil, coal and natural gas. Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal; conservation and the implementation of energy efficiency programs; or the diversification of our fuel supply with cleaner alternative fuels are just three of our options to reduce the global-warming-related air pollution.

California is the world's 12th largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, and along with many cities, including Santa Monica, has been in the forefront of doing our fair share to help solve this global problem. California's "Clean Car Law," a bill I authored in 2002, is the first-in-the-nation mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light duty trucks by 30% by 2016 beginning with model year car 2009 using off-the-shelf available technologies. Ten other states have now adopted California's regulations and Canada has signed an MOU with the automobile manufacturers to do the same. (It is important to note that only the Federal government can increase fuel efficiency or miles per gallon standards.) Unfortunately, both foreign and our own domestic automobile companies have now filed suit to stop these regulations from being implemented.

With rising gasoline prices, the need for a secure energy future, and a moral responsibility to do our fair share to reduce our carbon footprint, the next urgency is passing AB 32, a new bill Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez and I co-authored, and getting it to the Governor's desk next month. AB 32 will do two critical things:

- All significant contributors of greenhouse gases will be required to quantify and report their emissions through the Climate Registry and have them enforced by the Air Resources Board. This inventory will help to establish a baseline to guide us in reduction programs.
- It will set a cap on those emissions to begin reductions based on projected growth by 25% by the year 2020.

Unfortunately, many members of the business community, big oil companies and the State Chamber of Commerce are fiercely opposed. They have formed a new well-financed organization to lobby against this bill called SEECalifornia – Sustainable Environment and Economy for California, warning that businesses and jobs will flee the state. However, using current programs, the State is already nearly half way to the 2020 target.

Smart business owners get it. Capping emissions will send a clear market signal to companies that want to take the lead in developing and selling clean technologies and alternative fuels, and in creating sustainable jobs for the 21st century. AB 32 must pass the Legislature this session. As they have done before, other states will follow California's lead while we all wait for more responsive leadership on the Federal level.

You can help. Encourage your City Council, Board of Supervisors, members of Congress, civic, health, forward-thinking businesses, environmental organizations, and individuals to send letters or e-mails to their state legislators and to the Governor.

For information on how you can help, go to
www.environmentaldefense.org/go/ca/globalwarming,
or
www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/ncalifornia.asp.